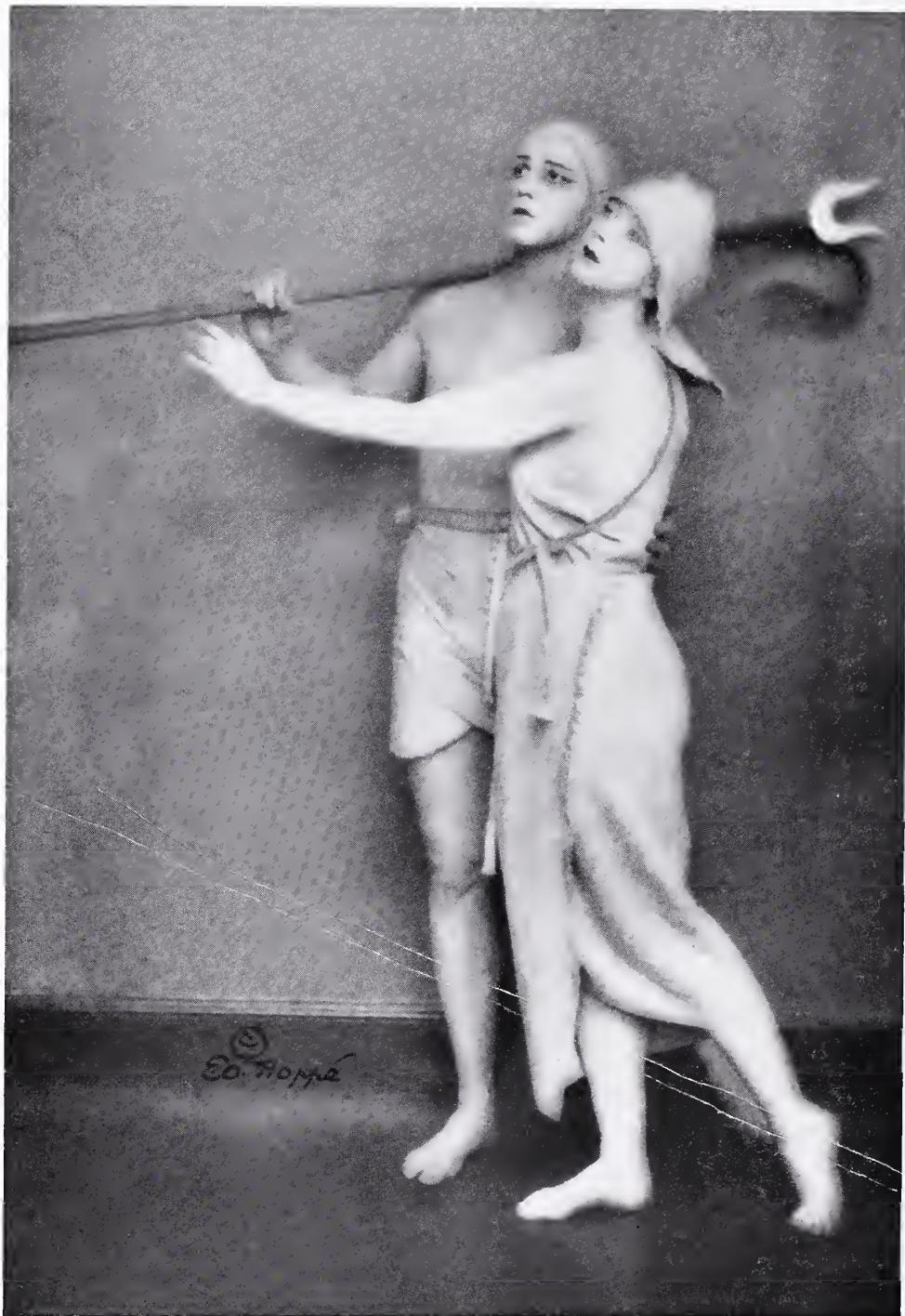


Dance Index

a new magazine devoted to dancing





EGYPTA. 1915

Dance Index

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Editors

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LINCOLN KIRSTEIN
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Comment

The cover of this, the fifth number of *Dance Index*, is a chart by Joseph Cornell, illustrating the structure of Denishawn. At the upper left, Ruth St. Denis lifts her Moroccan veil in a *Vision of Aïsoûa* (1924), one of the typical 'oriental' compositions for which she had become world famous. At the upper right is Ted Shawn in the eagle dance from *Feather of the Dawn* (1923), his most important native American Indian production. The two dancers are shown together in the Egyptian sequence from the Berkeley pageant of 1916. At the lower left is their pupil, Martha Graham, in *Serenata Moresca* (1920), and at the right Doris Humphries in the Burmese *Yen Pwe* (1926) and Charles Weidman in *Feather of the Dawn*. Here are the founders, separate and together, and their most famous offspring.

Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, after their long decades of work together, are both very much alive today. Their autobiographical writings have a freshness and candor that is a delight. The documents of their career have already been deposited in the Dance Archives of the Museum of Modern Art where they have been arranged and annotated.

Denishawn is a name that has really entered the American vocabulary. Memories of Ruth

St. Denis are in our common consciousness. There was a letter reprinted in PM from Private Graham Lusk Ringer to his mother from Bataan dated January 15, 1942 —

"I've been driving the CO in a jeep since the war began, you know one of those small cars that you don't get into but put on, like an overcoat. You also see pictures of them leaping through the air like Ruth St. Denis' Swan Dance."

Miss Ruth did not do a Swan Dance, but she, with Pavlova who did, represents dancing to many Americans whenever they think of it.

Ted Shawn has recently announced a dance festival and university to be established this summer at his Jacob's Pillow headquarters, near Lee, Massachusetts. This beautiful farm was long the training ground for his male dancers. Dancers representing many aspects and styles will appear on the festival series. Student courses, following the Denishawn ideal, are designed to give a broad range of practical experience.

The establishment of the Dancers War Fund, by those who wish to contribute their part today, recalls that Ted Shawn and many others were active in the last war.

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THE DENISHAWN ERA

(1 9 1 4 - 1 9 3 1)

by BAIRD HASTINGS

The great contribution of the Denishawn dancers in their generous absorption of the arts of our time was the establishment of the American dance as an independent art form. Although the pioneer Diaghilev tours of 1916-1917 in the United States powerfully affected our decorative arts, and Duncan had already stated the dance as a supreme personal expression, the thirteen Denishawn tours in seventeen years created a basic audience for the art among middle-class theatre-goers. It is due to Denishawn more than to Pavlova, the Ballet Russe or any other single factor, that theatrical dancing today does a two million dollar business.

While Denishawn brought the world's exotic dances to our legitimate theatres, its leaders were also aware of their native scene. St. Denis' 'oriental' numbers and 'music visualizations' were revelations to ordinary and critical audiences. Shawn led in the creation of works based on indigenous material. Later, as choreographer and teacher, he developed styles of movement attractive to the male dancer. Their common avidity for anything that could be adapted to theatrical use gave them a variety of program assimilable to a public used heretofore mainly to vaudeville, and it gave scope to their teaching. Their eclecticism was the necessary approach for their era. Dance as such, apart from variety or divertissement in opera or extravaganza, had never taken deep root in North America as it

had in nineteenth century Europe, although the fragmentary brilliance of its movement had always been genuinely appreciated. It took more than a little Yankee shrewdness for Denishawn to sell dancing to the American people.

The stylistic catholicism apparent in the Denishawn repertory found itself in all our arts of the epoch. The tower of Stanford White's Madison Square Garden appropriated Seville's Giralda, and Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building reared itself in a late Gothic skin. St. Gaudens carved General Sherman conducted by a renaissance angel, while the Vanderbilts dwelt in their Touraine chateau. At the same time there were strong native statements in the work of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Robert Henri (who was later to paint Miss Ruth in *Peacock*) became responsible, with Sloan and Bellows, for a rising nationalism to stand against the purely French taste of Glackens or Mary Cassatt. In music, Foote, H. S. Gilbert and John Alden Carpenter were beginning to employ native melodic material with themes from our verse and folklore.

Ruth Dennis was born in Newark in 1878 of Irish-American parents, and while absorbing early instruction from Karl Marwig, a social dance teacher, a book on Delsarte, and Maria Bonfanti, the aging star of *The Black Crook*, she participated

in an array of theatrical activity, high-kicking, skirt-dancing, acrobatics, as well as appearing on the "legitimate" stage. Although this training may seem fragmentary and accidental, nevertheless it included the main traditional currents of her day: Delsarte's codified gesture, the spectacles of the brothers Kiralfy, the local brand of classic ballet, the polite ballroom graces. Up to the moment she married Ted Shawn, her career had claimed her entire life.

In 1904, while playing "Mlle. LeGrand, a dancer from the Grand Opera," with Belasco's company in *Madame Dubarry* on tour, St. Denis noticed a cigarette window-card for Egyptian Deities. Something in the stiff pose of the seated goddess aroused the young actress-dancer. Vaguely symbolizing a new attitude towards a lyric theatre, it began to focus her still dreamy plans. St. Denis' fabulous career as 'oriental' dancer was launched at that instant, although it would take two years of preparation before it came to full realization.

Preoccupation with the Orient was scarcely a new fad, but with St. Denis it received a particular definition, in fact, its first consciously artistic presentation in an America which was still groping out of its insulated provincialism. It was a vision of the Near East, crystallized by Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign and the researches of Champollion and Maspero, that inspired Americans of the late nineteenth century. The travels of the painters Decamps and Delacroix had given an iconography of harems, odalisques, Moroccan rifle-men and Turkish corners, now chiefly seen in the luxurious lobbies of movie palaces built in the 'twenties. In literature, Kipling's Indian tales and novels like Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia" or Lew Wallace's "Ben Hur" which received elaborate stage productions certainly reinforced the vision, while Elihu Vedder's illustrations for FitzGerald's "Rubaiyat," along with the cat-tails, blue-china willowplate and peacock feathers, were decorative relics of Oscar Wilde's lecture tour to our Wild West in the early eighties.

And in the dance, one remembers Taglioni's role in *Le Dieu et la Bayadère* (1830), based on poems from Goethe's free adaptations of the "Divan of Hafiz." This ballet was performed in many versions all over Europe and America for thirty years. The sylphide's nautch dress definitely recalls St. Denis



Ca. 1900

in her famous *Rhoda*, first performed at the Hudson Theatre (March 6, 1906), the music for which was taken from the divertissement in Delibes' *Lakmé*.

In 1862, Marius Petipa produced *La Fille de Pharaon* at St. Petersburg, and *Aida* was commissioned by the Khedive from Verdi in 1871 to celebrate the completion of the Suez Canal. Its brassy triumphal scene and divertissement must have inspired the Manzotti spectacles in Milan, which in turn reached America via the 'oriental' pageants of the Kiralfy brothers. One of these, *Egypt Through the Centuries*, little Ruthie Dennis tells us she saw with rapture in 1893, the same year "Little Egypt" was doing her stuff at the Chicago Columbian Exposition. Her own orientalism was perhaps unconsciously compounded of these several sources, direct or indirect. She also read the Indian tales of F. W. Bain, and the French



St. Denis by Lachaise. Ca. 1910

orientalists Gustave Flaubert, Loti, Louys, and Anatole France.

From 1909 to 1912 Ruth St. Denis toured in concert and vaudeville with numbers from her first New York program, 'oriental' dances created in Europe and parts of *Egypta*. It was on the 1911 tour that twenty-year-old Edwin Myers Shawn first saw her dance.

Shawn had long been interested in the stage since most of his mother's family were show-people. Dur-

ing a period of inactivity following an attack of diphtheria, he managed with the "help" of a skeptical Christian Scientist, to think himself out of the Methodist ministry into the rituals of the dance. (He was later to create an entire church service in dance form, and the religious impulse has never been far away from any of his activity.) Still another factor in this secular "conversion" was the departure for New York of Dr. Christian Reisner, the expansive barnstorming sky-pilot who was to electrify Broadway with illuminated signs and schemes for a colossal temple.

Shawn says he never actually decided to dance, but once he began to take ballet lessons (from Hazel Wallack, who had had some training at the Italianate ballet school kept by the Metropolitan Opera in New York), he was irresistibly swept towards it. At the University of Denver he learned how to use a library systematically and how to organize source materials. The reading room with its "Arabian Nights" illustrated as a pastiche of Persian miniatures by Edmond Dulac, its files of the National Geographic Magazine (the 1912 volume of which provided sources for the entire Denishawn repertory), more than contact with the Russian Ballet or any direct influence from abroad, moulded his eclectic taste.

Moving to Los Angeles, Shawn had a variety of business experience, including working for the city water department, and he partnered a well known teacher, Norma Gould. For the early Edison Company he created a film, *Dance of the Ages*,* which began with the Neanderthal man, contained Greek, Roman, oriental, mediaeval, eighteenth century, Spanish dances, concluding with the latest ballroom steps. Then came a transcontinental tour with these same dances to the vacation centers provided for employees of the Santa Fe railroad. In the spring of 1914 he walked into Ruth St. Denis' Eighty-ninth Street studio where he stayed talking to her for eight hours.

The great volume of their work together, thus starting from a profound emotional illumination would, if detailed, fill many books. For present pur-

* Later Shawn appeared in C. B. De Mille's *Why Change Your Husband*, starring Gloria Swanson. For a total of four hours' work making a five-minute scene in which Miss Swanson was "shown love," he received \$500.



O-MIKA. 1913

poses four typical productions of the Denishawn company, and one earlier creation of St. Denis which embody their seminal ideas will be discussed.

O-Mika, the early St. Denis dance drama, certainly stemmed from a performance of Sadi Yacco and the Hanako troupe in Loie Fuller's tiny theatre, at the Paris Exposition of 1900.* These Japanese actor-dancers in the great Noh tradition were perhaps the first concrete human examples of oriental art the West had seen, although for long Japanese paper and pottery were idolized. Degas, Whistler, and Toulouse-Lautrec had fallen in love with Nipponese prints, supposedly first circularized in the West as tea wrappings. The work of Denman Ross and Ernest Fenellosa at Harvard and the foundation of the great oriental collection in the Boston Mu-

seum of Fine Arts dignified the vogue of Kimonos and ivory with a substructure of scholarship. Today one may forget that America was wildly pro-Japanese in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, and heroic tales of the Samurai soldiers were indirect support for Belasco's and Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*.

The crystallization of St. Denis's desire to present a Noh drama came in 1912 when, tired out from her vaudeville tour undertaken to recoup the loss from *Egypta* for H. B. Harris, her manager, she arrived in San Francisco where she saw a Japanese play in the native quarter, and at the same time came under the influence of Clarence Ramiel McGehee, a young American journalist. He had taught at the University of Tokio and had been the English tutor of the Emperor Motu Hito.

* See DANCE INDEX: March 1942.



Los Angeles: 1915

After studying the Noh drama—which is far more rigidly stylized and compact than the Chinese drama—she found a Lafcadio Hearn story which exactly fitted her impulse.* ‘The Legend of Fugen Bosatsu’ was included in his “Stray Leaves from Strange Literature.” It tells of a priest searching for the perfect soul. Entering a house of ill-fame, he is chosen by the courtesan, O-Mika, to be her companion for the night, but when she looks into his eyes, she is transformed into Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy. He finds peace at last. This element of Nirvana, peace, absolution and ecstasy assumed its

important part as the ultimate theme Miss Ruth always loved to portray.

O-Mika’s music was by R. H. Bowers. It was first presented March 13, 1913, despite scant hope of financial success. The drowning of H. B. Harris on the *Titanic* was a sad blow to plans for proper publicity, and the loss of seven thousand dollars was disastrous. However it was an artistic triumph.* Its lighting was remarkable, and St. Denis secured new intensities by lowering and raising the lamp in the graded gelatin tower. Her brother Buzz successfully assumed the role of a Samurai soldier.

* In 1902, David Belasco had produced *The Darling of the Gods*, a five-act drama of Japan by himself and J. L. Long, starring Blanche Bates. There were six geisha girls listed on the program as well as native musicians playing authentic instruments, the Biwa, Samsion, Koto, and Fuye.

* The photographer, White, has recorded St. Denis superbly and completely in this work. These are deposited in the Museum of Modern Art Dance Archives.

From this three-act work came Miss Ruth's *Flower Arrangement, Peacock* (Roth) inspired by Whistler's *Peacock Room*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Thirteenth Century Poetess*, *White Jade* (Vaughn), and *Kivannon* (Satie). Also from *O-Mika* evolved Shawn's *Oriental Group*, *Momiji Gari*, *Spear Dance*, and *Japanese Lion*. Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Doris Humphrey all took parts in some of these rearrangements. Today, thirty years afterward, St. Denis still wants to relate the stylized fusion of art and religion in terms of human values to America, perhaps through the motion picture.* St. Denis' dancing has never been "authentic," it has always made theatre use of movements employed in different styles. She has studied the form and created her own conception and then danced with extraordinary grace and a minimum of technical brilliance. On the other hand, Shawn always copied as exactly as possible the motions of the dancer he was studying rather than attempting recreation of the mood in a more personal manner.

Between *O-Mika* and preparations for the Hearst pageant, Denishawn, the first serious school of the dance with a considered curriculum and standard of achievement in America, was opened in Westlake Park in Los Angeles. Nearby was their cottage, Tedruth. Students dropped their tuition money in a cigar box as they passed through a doorway to an open-air studio where the classes were held. From these modest beginnings grew the greater Denishawn school and its branches throughout the nation under Kathrane Edson, the Braggioti sisters, and Hazel Kranz. The California headquarters supplied dancers for films and gave instruction to the Gish sisters, Ina Claire, Ruth Chatterton, Myrna Loy, and many vaudeville headliners. In 1922 the New York school was established, and thereafter replaced Los Angeles as center of their activities, both theatrical and educational. Through its branches and teachers of Denishawn in smaller cities, it touched the layman as well as professionals. Winter and summer instruction was offered in 'music visualization,' 'oriental' dances, Delsarte, training in ensemble dances. Burton Holmes travel

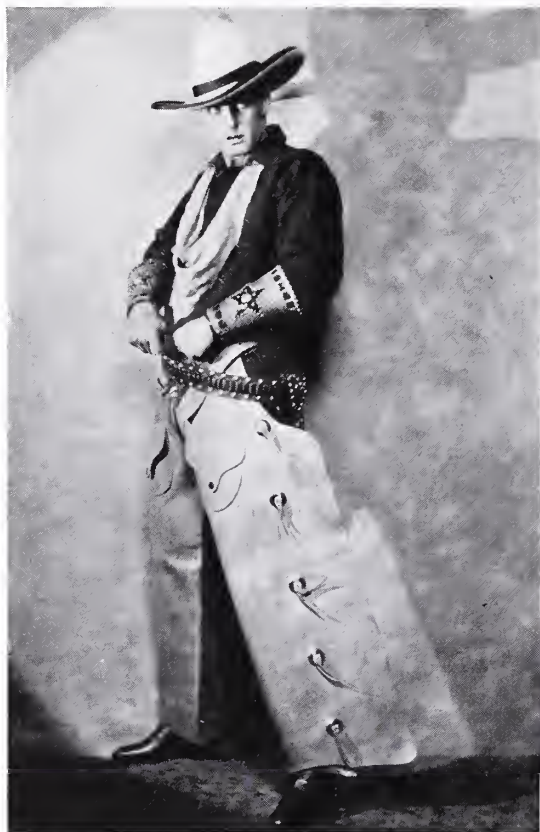


XOCHITL. 1920

films,* and supplementary lectures were offered in the history of the dance, its religious aspects, the attitude of the dancer toward the human body, the handling of draperies, costume, photography, publicity, and stage make-up. As the years passed, new material from revolutionary foreign sources was added to the curriculum. In 1930 the first course in Mary Wigman's radical technique was authorized in America under Denishawn auspices by Margarete Wallmann, the Viennese ballet mistress. Of the two principals, Shawn was the more interested in the school, arranging schedules and teaching most of

* Paul Goodman, a young American poet, has just published "Stop Light," dance-poems in a form related to the Noh, and influenced by Ezra Pound.

* Constant touring led one Pittsburgh critic to remark: In the life of every Denishawn dancer there is no place like Burton Holmes.



COWBOY TOMMY. 1922

the classes. With admirable candor, Miss St. Denis writes:

I was never a good teacher. Obviously I am too deep an egotist to have that particularly unselfish attitude toward a student which is the basis of teaching genius. I confused rather than clarified, and someone's help was frequently needed to finish what I started. What I gave Denishawn and what I shall give pupils as long as I am able, is an artistic stimulus to go and do something, anything, that is a release and a joy to a young artist.

The first important production of Denishawn came on July 29, 1916, the second summer of their school. Professor Armes of the University of California offered them the open-air William Randolph Hearst Greek Theatre in Berkeley where Sarah Bernhardt and Maude Adams had already appeared.

In each of the six scenes a broad walk at the front of the stage represented a great river, the Nile, Styx, or Ganges. The Egyptian scenes with music by Walter Myrowitz and sets by Robert Law, presented 'The Life' and 'The After-Life: The Hall of Judgment.' In the first was portrayed the rise of Egypt, beginning with the duet, 'Tillers of the Soil' (frontispiece), continuing with the shepherd kings, the growth of religion, the union with Ethiopia, and finally the overthrow and crumbling of Egyptian civilization. The second scene showed the soul of Egypt, Isis, wending her way to the Hall of Judgment to appear before the Judges of the Dead. Osiris accepts the Soul which passes the test and arises to the realm of the Justified. Ceremonial dances of the rebirth begin.

It was in Europe that the original inspiration projected by the cigarette poster had grown up. When Harris felt she was ready St. Denis, accompanied by her mother and brother, made her pilgrimage abroad, during which the *Nautch* and *Yogi* were added to her small repertory. At first unappreciated by the English, she later appeared before Edward VII, and G. B. Shaw, the painter Sargent, the poet Yeats, Max Beerbohm, and J. M. Barrie sponsored her. She experienced the usual difficulties in securing a theatre in Paris, but once arranged by her new Russian manager Braff, she achieved a considerable success. However, she never understood the French, nor did she very much try. Miss Ruth was terrified by Rodin's almost automatic impetuosity, and she turned to Germany where she enjoyed an immediate and unqualified triumph. For once she felt she could discuss her art on an independent intellectual basis. After all, she considered herself something more than a French music-hall artist. She was quite happy in Germany until her devotees declared they must build her a theatre of her own and keep her near Berlin for at least five years. Suddenly Miss Ruth at the height of her European success realized that she belonged to an America that had not yet really appreciated her. So she went flying home before she lost her roots.

In Germany St. Denis executed her 'oriental' arm ripples for a college of medical men, who decided she must be in some way deformed. True or not, this story gives us some idea of her originality. It also suggests that contemporary knowledge of human movement and its potential for dancing

was rather slim. Here she saw Wedekind's *Love's Awakening*, Reinhardt's production of *Lysistrata*, and Wagner's *Tristan*. She met Count Kessler, the great art patron, and was painted by the younger von Kaulbach. With Hugo von Hofmannstahl she discussed the philosophy of the East, reinforcing her early theosophism fed by the novels of F. Marion Crawford and the writings of Madame Blavatski. She felt these talks with the librettist of *Elektra* were her most profound experience in Germany. St. Denis saw the Glyptothek with the Aegina marbles and the Barbarini Faun as well as the Secession in the Glas Palast with the school of Franz von Stuck. The Munich school had created a vivid, pornographic antiquity, replacing the frigidity of Ingres by a physicality derived from the romantic realism of Delacroix and Courbet. The German revivalists of the antique had a sensual immediacy outrivalling Alma Tadema or George Frederick Watts.

The first scene of the Greek episode of the Berkeley pageant, including a Fortuny veil dance by Miss Ruth (from her Munich period), synthesized two contrasting aspects of Grecian life, the philosophical and the athletic. There was a Pyrrhic dance led by Shawn entirely for boys. Margaret Severn as Priestess of Bacchus was particularly praised. In the second scene Orpheus attempted to rescue Eurydice from Hades, and failed because he could not resist stealing a glance at his beloved before she emerged. Persephone's brief visit to the underworld brought only momentary relief. Louis Horst arranged the music from Massenet, *Ada de Lachau*, and others. St. Denis' inspiration may possibly be traced back to an early vision of Genevieve Stebbins, Delsarte's disciple. And always before her there had been Isadora; but St. Denis' Hellas was more concrete, less personal than Duncan's.

In the early *Rhoda* Miss St. Denis had related, at least in her mind, the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy with the Gautama Buddha. The texts of both she read continuously. Now in *India* (the final section of the Berkeley pageant) she developed a more complete approach to these ideas. Here, a hunter and his companions depart, leaving his wife on the banks of the Ganges. When day is done, the wife performs his funeral rites, the hunter having given his life to save another. The second

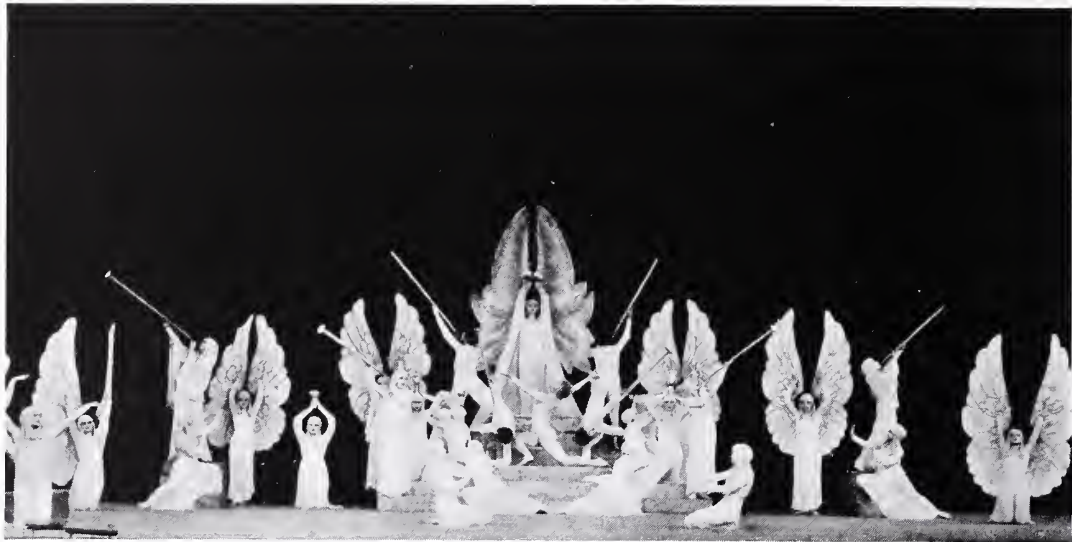
scene with music by Arthur Nevins already had been performed as *Bakawali* at the Ravinia Festival, Chicago, in 1914. It may have been inspired by Lawrence Hope's "India Love Lyrics," illustrated by the English water-colorist Byam Shaw. The reincarnation of the man and woman of the first scene displayed them again as yogi and sacred courtesan. A divertissement for Nautch girls,* fortune-tellers, jugglers, snake charmers, finally priests followed. The beauty tried to seduce the yogi, but failed. When he recognized in her his wife of a former existence, he commands her to discard all possessions, and at last she finds Nirvana.

Although a famous solo "Black and Gold Sari" derived from it, *Bakawali* never enjoyed the popularity of *Rhoda*. Perhaps Nevins' score was not as distinguished as Delibes', or Miss Ruth was tired. More likely, the production was hurried and the element of processional spectacle introduced by Shawn was not controlled. Miss Ruth must then have realized that a large production was not an end in itself, and could never replace pure dancing.

Stimulated by the playing of George Copeland, and also by his ensemble of six girl dancers, in 1917 Ruth St. Denis first conceived of her 'music visualization.' Shawn, who always had a real facility, in a serious or light vein, for 'oriental' or American numbers alike, immediately arranged choreography for several Bach Preludes and Inventions. The idea was further developed by the program of the Ruth St. Denis concert dancers of 1920. Feeling that her touring in *Theodora*, a Byzantine dance drama, (however necessary financially) was neither vital nor constructive, St. Denis attempted to surpass Duncan in her use of the entire body. She made no conscious use of the Dalcroze system of Eurythmics, which gave a comment in simple movement to every note in the musical structure, but the Dalcroze ideas had been in the air since the start of the century and had even affected Vaslav Nijinsky by 1913 (in his *Jeux*).

Inspired by her own almost accidental improvisation to Liszt's *Liebesträume*, she commenced with

* At the Berlin Opera in 1906, St. Denis had staged the dances in *Lakmé*.



THE LAMP. 1929

the first movement of Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique*, working in close collaboration with the young students Doris Humphrey and Clair Niles, and particularly the pianists Louis Horst and Dane Rudyahr. She attempted to translate each phrase into pure movement. The emotional content of the action varied with the music, as did the vigor of the movements. In 'visualization' there were plastic dynamics in harmony with the music. In the 'synchoric orchestra,' each dancer represented a specific instrument and his or her movements were absolutely regulated by the entrance or combination of brass, woodwind, or strings. Gradually compositions of Scarlatti, Mendelssohn, Godard, and Schubert (*The Unfinished Symphony*), were added to the repertoire. As the result of an article Martha Graham saw on Mary Wigman, Humphrey's *Tragica*, originally created to a MacDowell sonata, was at one time danced entirely without music. St. Denis' first audience of trained musicians to her experiments in the new form was equally unimpressed by the versions in bathing suits or in colored veils, but the public received them with enthusiasm, and for ten years they had a place on almost every program, usually as an overture. Recent works by Doris Humphrey, such as *Passacaglia* (1939), stem from the 'music visualizations.' As a

matter of fact, much of the "abstract" or absolute interest in dance as dance, apart from historic style or literary sentiment, in the "modern" repertory of Graham, Humphrey and Weidman may be traced back to this aspect of Denishawn.

On a less organized and ambitious scale than the Diaghilev ballet, though with more imagination than any other native group, Shawn and St. Denis had already pioneered in the use of music for dancing. They were among the first to base works on Griffes, Fauré, Honegger, and Palmgren. After hearing George Copeland play *Gnossiennes* and *Gymnopédies*, Shawn bought every piece of Satie available. Shawn was acute musically, appreciating Debussy and Scriabin, but preferring for theatrical usage a Strauss waltz or a Drigo serenade. In other instances such as *Cuadro Flamenco* or *Spear Dance*, the music was arranged by Louis Horst. Originally a violinist in a theatre orchestra, he has had a significant influence on the American scene as collaborator with Denishawn for ten years as well as fifteen years with "modern" dancers.

Some of Denishawn's most effective productions were performed to music commissioned from Robert S. Stoughton (*The Spirit of the Sea*, *Idylle*, and *Garden of Kama*), Harvey Worthington

Loomis (*Incense*), Lily Strickland (*The Cosmic Dance of Shiva*), E. G. Stricklen, and Anis Fuleihan.

Opportunities were given to a few young painters, notably Robert Law, Carol Sax, and the English illustrator Maxwell Armfield, but the decor of Denishawn was never particularly distinguished. None of the decorators, for example, could be considered easel painters. Their sets were enlarged book illustrations, with the heavy outlines, flat surfaces, and broken color of a dilute impressionism. The Denishawn productions never found themselves far from vaudeville due to the historic economic difficulties of sustaining an independent company, and constant traveling left less energy for teaching, though the schools issued catalogues for seventeen consecutive seasons.

Nochitl, a Toltec drama in two scenes, was Shawn's production on an Aztec theme, music by Homer Grunn, settings by the Mexican decorator, Francisco Cornejo.* Performed by 12 dancers completely on the half toe, the movement of *Nochitl* was stylized in the direction of Aztec reliefs. The story told in pantomime how Xochtl's father brewed an intoxicating potion from the maguey. Xochtl offered it to the emperor, who, becoming drunk, tried to seduce her. The father would have killed the emperor, but the girl falls in love with him, and is crowned empress.

Shortly after coming out of the army in 1919, Shawn had arranged *Nochitl*. At this time he also had five vaudeville units on tour. *Nochitl* was hurriedly done, but enjoyed a considerable success, remaining in the joint repertoire for five years. In it Shawn starred Robert Gorham, and later Charles Weidman and Martha Graham. He may have recognized in this maturing student some instinctive leaning towards the essential stuff of dancing, a feeling for stark movement which would emerge years later in *Primitive Mysteries* (1932) and *Penitente* (1938). The following year Shawn assumed the male lead, and for the English tour Miss St. Denis took over Martha's role, for which Miss Ruth herself said she was unsuited.

* C. W. Beaumont has assumed the decor was Greek.



1941.

Contact with Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter in England in 1922, and their admiration for Emerson and Whitman had, if anything, only reinforced Shawn's determination to fight for a specifically American repertory, and on his return he arranged *Boston Fancy*, *Crapshooter* and *Cowboy Tommy* to the music of Eastwood Lane's *American Sketches*. He was the first to use the phrase "American Ballet," and his book with that title tells of his ideal, a very different one from that of Balanchine. Shawn believed in indigenous dances, Balanchine in American dancers. From the inspiration of paintings by Robert Henri and George Brush, the sculpture of A. P. Proctor and Cyrus Dallin, and the Indian suites of Cadman, C. S. Skilton, and John Philip Sousa, Shawn had already created *Invocation to the Thunderbird* (1918). He was to do *Osage-Pawnee* (1930), and *Zuni Indian* (1931). Later his men's group danced *John Brown*, and *O Libertad*, deriving from "Leaves of Grass," which was also Isadora's Bible,

and brought to the theatre the early American, Spanish, colonial and contemporary stylistic movements that have become a major source of the American repertory. The stage Indian was now caught in the current which was to presage Ballet Caravan's *Billy the Kid*, choreographed by Eugene Loring.

Shawn's most ambitious North American Indian work was *Feather of the Dawn*, with music by Charles Wakefield Cadman, and a practicable stage pueblo (so bulky as to have to be replaced by a backdrop for touring) designed by Earl Franke. The splendid clothes were made at Denishawn by Pearl Wheeler after authentic designs collected by Shawn on a visit to the Hopi reservation. First presented in 1923, its plot describes how an Indian youth at dawn watches a feather rise and float out of sight. This marks a propitious day, so he requests the hand of his beloved. There follows the wedding celebration, with a Corn-grinding song, Basket dance, a Dance of the Corn Maidens, an Eagle dance, the proposal ceremony, the blessing of the bride, the Wolf dance (entirely by boys), and the assemblage of the tall masked Katchinas (Hopi tribal Gods) for the wedding. Shawn, Louise Brooks, and Pauline Lawrence took the leading roles.

Shortly after this, Denishawn lost Louis Horst and Martha Graham. Miss Graham left first. She has always acknowledged that her training from Denishawn was irreplaceable, but she felt then she was obligated to attempt something on her own, and she accepted a call to the Eastman School, Rochester, N.Y. Horst followed, realizing that he did not wish to tour the Orient, only to return with rearrangements or restatements of the themes they had been continuously presenting for the past ten years. The departure of Horst involved much more than the replacement of a pianist, it marked the loss of a friend and collaborator.

On the return of the Denishawn company from the Orient in 1926, a tour with a Ziegfeld Folies company was arranged to help pay for Denishawn house. Looking at it later, Miss Ruth remarked: "Every brick, a one-night stand." The following year, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman left, after nearly a decade of work together. Miss Ruth and Shawn had wanted them to go out again in

vaudeville to help pay for the school. While wishing to stay at Denishawn, Humphrey and Weidman felt their own position as creative artists was not considered. They themselves were beginning to sense a new attitude towards the dance, and they resented personal restrictions. Despite the continued brilliance of the Denishawn "salon" to which came Constance Smedley, Albert Herter, Coomaraswami, Kolbe and many others, the cost of Denishawn house, and the loss of their best dancers, as well as difficult personal relationships, forcibly indicated the end of the era.

Shawn's later contributions included *Jurgen** (1928), suggested by several episodes of James Branch Cabell's satire, with music by Deems Taylor, and in 1931 *Job*, a masque for dancing in eight scenes, inspired by William Blake's drawings, with music by Vaughan Williams. This same year Ninette de Valois choreographed the score for Sadler's Wells. *The Lamp* (1929) was Miss St. Denis' last large work. To music of Liszt's *Les Preludes*, based on Blake drawings, she portrayed the metaphysical lamp of the perfect life. *Jurgen*, *The Lamp* and *Job* had their first performances at the Lewisohn Stadium in New York City. The Stadium season was always a gala for the Denishawn dancers.

The story of Denishawn, detailed so far in Miss Ruth's "An Unfinished Life," and eventually to appear in Shawn's "Thousand and One Night Stands" records their personal life together, their initial idyllic happiness, their inevitable separation. Shawn resented what he felt was her overweening ambition, her mother's possessiveness, and his ambiguous position in the theatrical advertising. Though less well known, he had enthusiasm and egotism as fierce as her own. In a sense probably neither understood the other. The basic reason for their split was the sincere desire of each to develop independently his fullest creative powers. They were never divorced.

In 1933 Shawn set forth with the first all-male dance ensemble America had seen. The position of the male dancer had always been questionable. As

* The program said: "All moves uncomprehendingly. All my life was a foiled quest of you, Queen Helen." "Jurgen bidding farewell to that dream of beauty which he had the vision to see, but not the strength to follow."



JACOB'S PILLOW: 1940

long as he was a comedian or acrobat he was tolerated, particularly if he sang and acted. But a boy dancer as an independent artist seemed to have borrowed the odor of effeminacy from the male dancers of the late nineteenth century who were reduced to being mere supports by the canonization of the *prima ballerina assoluta*. Shawn's *Labor Symphony* and *Kinetic Molpai* were a manifesto of the right of men to dance. They were based on movements of workers in fields, forests, on the sea, and in factories. For these works Shawn chose men who had been scout masters or gym instructors. He provided them with movement which was sufficiently colloquial to be assimilated by provincial audiences with minimum resentment. He was an evangelist for the male dancer. He lectured, he gave demonstrations, he insisted and he succeeded. His belief in the ideal of Whitman is an heroic affirmation of our national artistic tradition. The debt of male dancers to Ted Shawn is tremendous.

There was also a period devoted to the place of dance in education. Miss St. Denis taught at Adelphi College on Long Island, and created the church service, *Mary Magdalene* as a companion piece to *Rhoda* and *Ishtar*; and Shawn lectured at the College of Physical Education, Springfield, Massachusetts. This work symbolized what has been the real contribution of Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn: the education of audiences, the education of dancers. From their system, which was no system, but rather a broad exposure to theatrical styles and stage experience, have emerged a second generation of important American artists: Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, Doris Humphrey, and their peers. Denishawn permitted them, even in their rupture from it, the achievement of an independence, maturity, and a sequence of creation which the idiosyncratic followers of Loie Fuller or Isadora Duncan never did.

Almanac

JUNE

5. Gertrude Lippincott and Virginia Bryant. Y.W.C.A. Minneapolis, Minnesota
8. Jan Veen, Erika Thimey, and group. Symphony Hall. Boston, Massachusetts
16. Angna Enters. Los Angeles, California
17. May O'Donnell, Jose Limon, and Ray Green. Y.M.H.A. New York City
19. Angna Enters. Los Angeles, California
Maria Gambarelli. Washington, D.C.
20. Margot Koche. Chicago, Illinois
Victory Ball. New York City
21. Felicia Sorel and Bruhs Mero. Dance Gallery. New York City
22. Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Lewisohn Stadium. New York City (also 23 and 24)

JULY

6. Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Lewisohn Stadium. New York City (also 7 and 8)
9. Opening of Jacob's Pillow Festival. Lee, Massachusetts. Program features American Folk Dance (also 10 and 11)
16. Argentinita, Lopez, Rey. Jacob's Pillow. Lee, Massachusetts (also 17 and 18)
23. Irene Castle and others in American Ballroom Dances. Jacob's Pillow. Lee, Massachusetts (also 24 and 25)
30. La Meri, Seika Sarina, Jack Cole. Dances of the Orient. Jacob's Pillow. Lee, Massachusetts (also 31 and August 1)